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www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/kuipers/

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Sen. Kuipers' pier-safety legislation passed by House, now headed to governor

LANSING — The Michigan House of Representatives today passed Sen. Wayne Kuipers' legislation that would make it a crime for anyone who tampers with or steals a marine-safety device maintained by a state or local government.

The legislation, Senate Bills 816 and 817, now will go to the governor for consideration. The bills are sponsored by Sens. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, and Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac, who each represent districts that border one of the Great Lakes.

"Taking a life ring from a pier may seem like a harmless prank, but it puts everyone who uses the pier at risk," Kuipers said. "I want to commend all the members of the Great Lakes safety task force for making people aware of how to have fun near the water safely and reminding us about the dangers of rip currents."

The bills, which already have passed the Senate, would make it a misdemeanor for anyone who tampers with or steals a marine-safety device maintained by the state or a local government. If a person dies or becomes permanently disabled because the device was unavailable or unusable, the offender can be found guilty of a felony.

The plan has been vigorously supported by Vicki Cech, the mother of a Grand Haven youth who drowned while swimming near the Grand Haven pier. A rip current swept Cech's son, Andy Fox, away before his friends could find a life preserver to throw to him. Cech has testified before legislative committees in favor of the measures.

Besides pushing for tougher laws, Cech and other members of the Great Lakes Beach and Pier Safety Task Force have created informational material to educate people how to use piers safely and about the dangers of rip currents. The group's Web site is located at www.respectthepower.org.

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